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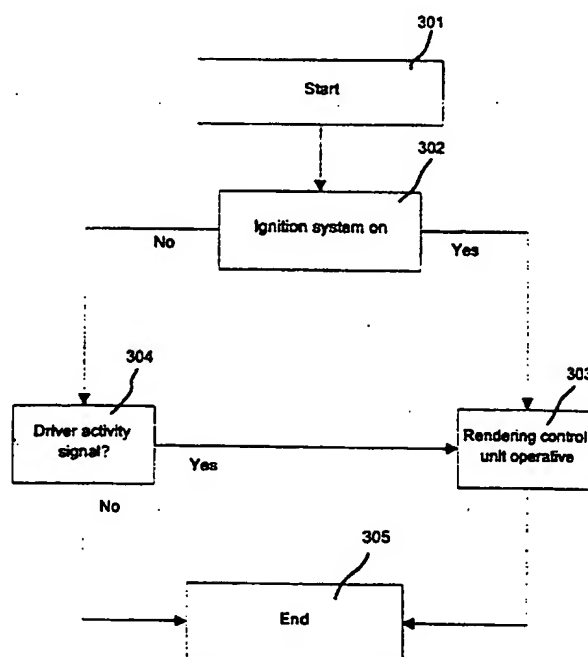
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25 The Square, Martlesham Heath, IPSWICH, Suffolk,
IP5 7SL, United Kingdom**(54) Activation of a control unit for an automated vehicle clutch or gearbox**

(57) An electronic control unit for an automated clutch or gearbox is activated in response to one or more sensors indicating activity by an operator of the vehicle. Examples of such sensors are ones generating signals denoting the condition or position of the parking brake, brake pedal, gear selector lever, accelerator pedal, doors, bonnet or boot lid, alarm system, light switches, horn or radio. The activation of the control unit is independent of the operation of the ignition system or the starter of the engine.

Fig. 4



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Fig. 1

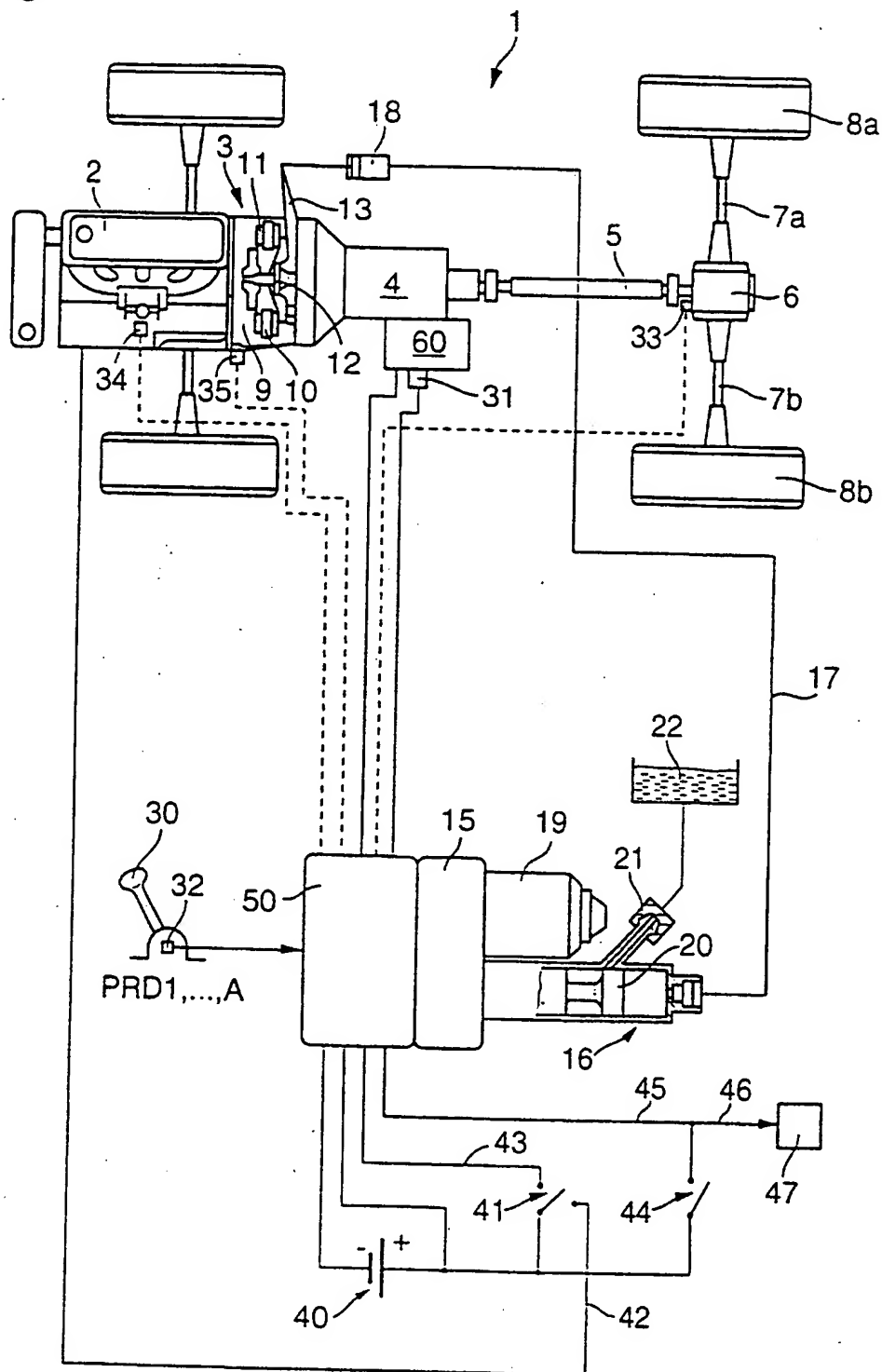
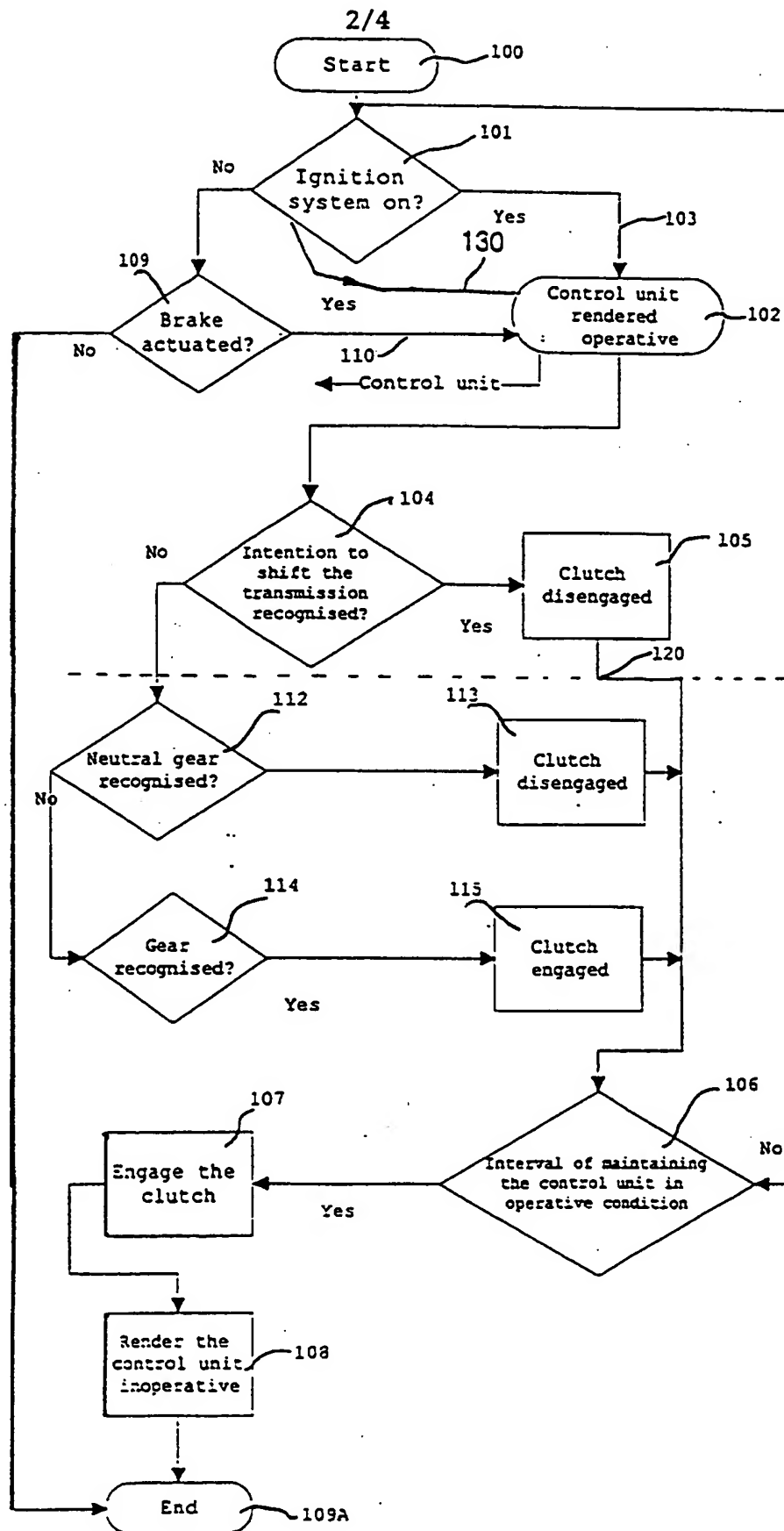
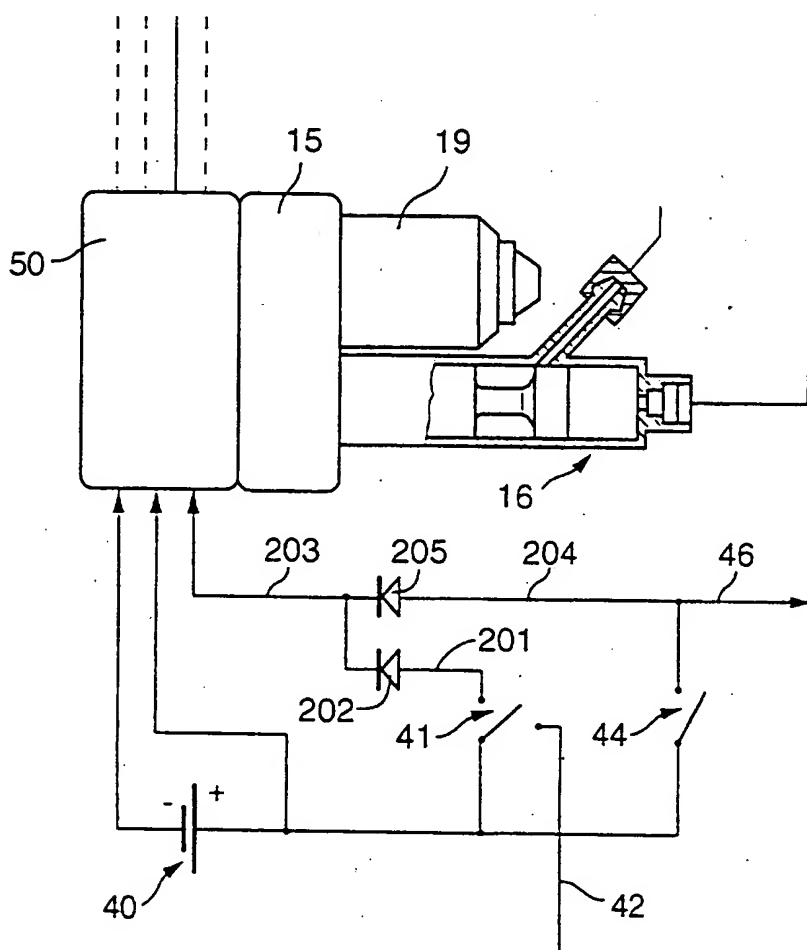


Fig. 2



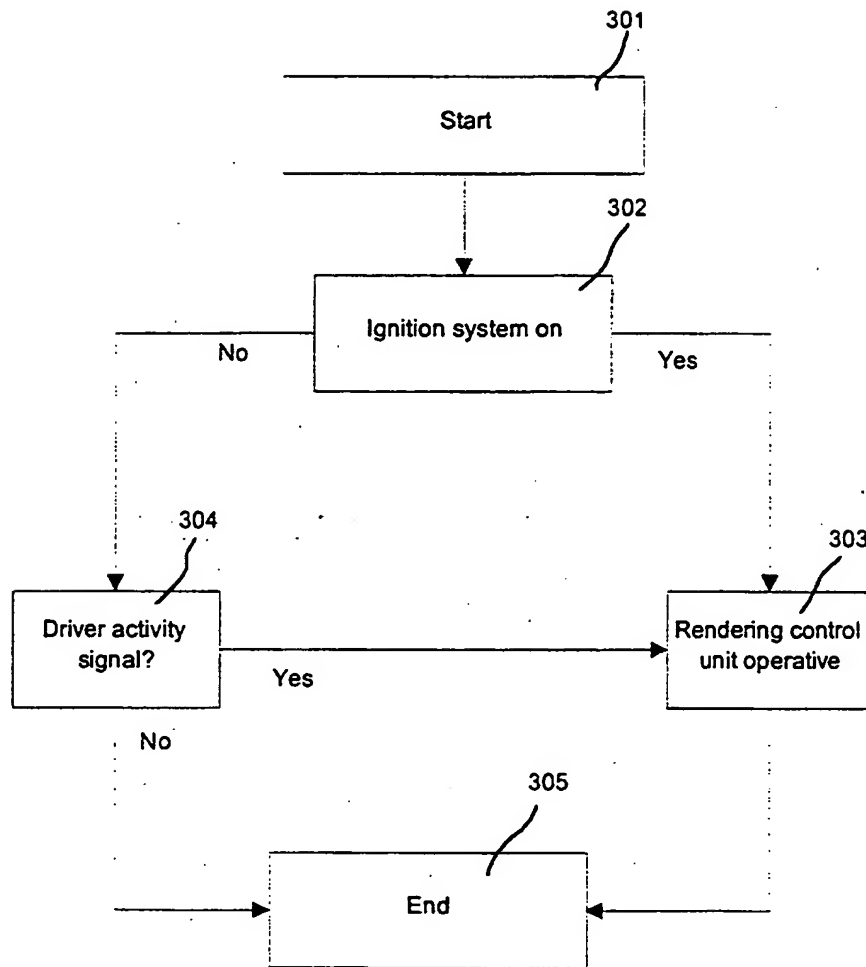
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Fig. 3



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Fig. 4



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POWER TRAIN WITH AUTOMATED TRANSMISSION

- The invention relates to motor vehicles in general, and more particularly to improvements in motor vehicles
- 5 having power trains embodying automated torque transmitting systems (such as friction clutches) and/or automated variable speed transmission systems. Still more particularly, the invention relates to improvements in power trains wherein the automated
- 10 system or systems is or are actuated in response to commands from a control unit (such as a microprocessor which receives signals from monitoring means including one or more sensors.
- 15 It is already known to render the control unit operative in response to activation of the ignition system for the engine in the power train of a motor vehicle. Signal or signals from the sensor means which monitors the ignition system causes or cause the
- 20 control unit to change the condition of the clutch (e.g., by way of a hydraulic, mechanical or other suitable actor) and/or to change the ratio of the transmission (e.g., by way of another actor). The arrangement can be such that the control unit becomes
- 25 operative in automatic response to actuation of the ignition system in a sense to start the engine.

Motor vehicles of the above outlined character are disclosed in U.S. patent No. 4,892,014 granted January

30 9, 1990 to Morell et al. for "ELECTRONIC CONTROLLER FOR AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION The disclosure of this patent is incorporated herein by reference. Morell et al. disclose one or more microprocessors serving to control an automatic transmission and being designed to change

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its or their condition from inoperative (idle) to operative (ready for use) in response to completion of the ignition circuit by an ignition key or a switch. A drawback of the patented apparatus is that, if the operator of the motor vehicle desires to carry out one or more particular (specific) operations or steps which can be carried out only while the microprocessor(s) is or are operative, it is invariably necessary to change the condition of the microprocessor(s) from inoperative to operative before the operator of the motor vehicle can proceed with the carrying out of the particular (specific) operations or steps. Thus, an operation which can be carried out only while the microprocessor(s) of Morell et al. is or are operative must be preceded by a manipulation of the ignition key or of a switch if the operator of the motor vehicle desires to carry out such operation while the microprocessor(s) is or are inoperative. This is often inconvenient to the operator, especially when it is necessary to carry out the particular (specific) operation or operations on short notice, i.e., either immediately or with a minimum of delay.

An object of the invention is to provide a motor vehicle with a novel and improved arrangement for actuating one or more automated systems (such as a friction clutch and/or a change-speed transmission) in the power train of the motor vehicle.

Another object of the invention is to provide an arrangement which renders it possible to perform, without the need for a preceding compulsory change of the condition of one or more microprocessors and/or other suitable control units for the automated system or systems, one or more operations which, in accordance

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with heretofore known proposals including the teaching of Morell et al., are possible only when the microprocessor(s) is or are operative.

5 A further object of the invention is to provide a power train whose manipulation is less cumbersome to the operator of the motor vehicle embodying the power train and less time consuming than the manipulation of power trains in accordance with heretofore known proposals.

10 An additional object of the invention is to provide a power train whose manipulation is at least as safe and reliable as the manipulations in accordance with heretofore known teachings.

15 Still another object of the invention is to provide a novel and improved method of actuating or manipulating a microprocessor-controlled power train in a passenger car or in another motor vehicle.

20 A further object of the invention is to provide a novel and improved control unit for an automated torque transmitting system and/or an automated gear ratio changing transmission system in the power train of a
25 motor vehicle.

Another object of the invention is to provide a vehicle which embodies the above outlined power train and the control unit(s) for one or more automated systems of
30 the power train.

An additional object of the invention is to provide a novel and improved combination of one or more electronic control units, one or more sensors, and one
35 or more actuating means for regulating the operation of

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one or more automated systems in the power train of a motor vehicle.

5 Still another object of the invention is to provide a motor vehicle wherein the condition of one or more control units for the friction clutch and/or automated transmission of the power train can be altered without necessitating any attention from the operator of the motor vehicle.

10

A further object of the invention is to provide a relatively simple, compact and inexpensive control arrangement for one or more automated constituents or systems in the power train of a motor vehicle.

15

Another object of the invention is to provide an arrangement of the above outlined character which can employ readily available standard constituents, such as ignition systems, sensors, switches, actuating means
20 and/or others, so that it can be assembled at a relatively (or even surprisingly) low cost to simplify the task of the operator without, however, endangering the occupant or occupants of the motor vehicle.

25 One feature of the invention resides in the provision of a motor vehicle which comprises a power train including a prime mover, an automatically actuatable transmission and a torque transmitting system. The vehicle further comprises at least one control unit
30 having operative and inoperative conditions, actuating means operating between the at least one control unit and the transmission to actuate the transmission in the operative condition of the at least one control unit, a starting device for the prime mover (such starting
35 device has activated and idle conditions and is

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- operative to change the condition of the at least one control unit in response to a change between its actuated and idle conditions), and means for monitoring the activities of the operator of the motor vehicle and for transmitting to the at least one control unit signals which effect a change from inoperative to operative condition in response to detection of at least one particular activity of the operator.
- 10 The torque transmitting system can include a friction clutch which can be installed in the power train in such a way that it connects an output element of the prime mover with an input element of the automated transmission.
- 15 The aforementioned particular activity can involve the actuation of a brake, such as a foot-operated brake or a parking brake.
- 20 The monitoring means can include at least one first sensor which serves to transmit the aforementioned signals, and at least one additional sensor.
- If the prime mover of the motor vehicle includes a combustion engine, the aforementioned starting device can comprise an ignition system for the engine.
- If the torque transmitting system of the power train is an automatically actuatable system, the vehicle can further comprise an additional control unit and second actuating means interposed between the additional control unit and the automated torque transmitting system. The additional control unit serves to actuate the automated torque transmitting system by way of the second actuating means in response to signals from the

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at least one control unit.

The actuating means for the automated transmission is or can be arranged to actuate the transmission in response to a change from inoperative condition to operative condition of the at least one control unit.

The at least one control unit is or can be arranged to remain in the operative condition for a predetermined interval of time following a change from its inoperative condition to its operative condition in response to the transmission of a signal by the monitoring means. still further, the arrangement can be such that, when the starting device assumes or dwells in its idle condition, the at least one control unit can remain in the operative condition for the duration of signal transmission by the monitoring means.

The automated transmission can be designed in such a way that it is manually shiftable into a plurality of gears. The signal which effects a change from inoperative to operative condition of the at least one control unit can be indicative of manual shifting of the transmission into one of the plurality of gears by the operator of the motor vehicle, i.e., such signal is clearly indicative of a particular activity of the operator.

Furthermore, if the transmission is designed to be shiftable into any one of several gears (such as parking, reverse, neutral and several forward gears), a signal which effects a change from inoperative to operative condition of the at least one control unit is or can be indicative of the momentary (i.e., then effective) gear of the transmission.

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If the transmission is shiftable into a plurality of gears and the torque transmitting system is an automatically disengageable system, the motor vehicle
5 can further comprise additional actuating means for the torque transmitting system and the at least one control unit can include means for disengaging the torque transmitting system by way of the additional actuating means in response to a signal denoting an intention by
10 the operator to shift the transmission from a particular gear into a different gear, i.e., the automated torque transmitting system is automatically disengaged at least for the duration of shifting the transmission into a different gear.

15 At least one sensor of the monitoring means can be designed to be effective for the generation of signals in the inoperative condition of the at least one control unit. Furthermore, at least one sensor of the
20 monitoring means can be designed and installed to transmit signals for the duration of one or more particular activities of the operator of the motor vehicle, and the at least one control unit can remain operative only during transmission of signals by the at
25 least one sensor. Alternatively, the at least one control; unit can remain operative during transmission of signals by the at least one sensor as well as for intervals following transmission of such signals; each such interval can take up a predetermined period of
30 time (i.e., the duration of each such interval can be the same).

The monitoring means can comprise one or more analog sensors and/or one or more digital sensors and/or one
35 or more sensors which include or constitute switches.

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In accordance with a presently preferred embodiment, the monitoring means can include means (such as one or more sensors and/or switches) for generating signals which denote at least one of (a) the condition of a parking brake, (b) the position of a brake pedal, (c) actuation of a door switch, (d) the position of a hood, (e) the position of a trunk cover, (f) the condition of an alarm system, (g) the condition of a seat switch, (h) the position of the gas pedal, (i) the position of a light control switch, (j) the condition of a headlamp flasher, (k) the condition of the horn, (l) the condition of a radio receiver, (m) the position of a gear selecting element (such as a lever) for the transmission, and (n) the position or condition of any other adjustable constituent of the vehicle which can be manipulated by the operator.

Another feature of the invention resides in the provision of a motor vehicle which comprises a power train including a prime mover, an automatically actuatable table transmission and an automatically actuatable torque transmitting system. The vehicle further comprises at least one control unit having operative and inoperative conditions, first actuating means which operates between the at least one control unit and the transmission to actuate the transmission in the operative condition of the at least one control unit, second actuating means which operates between the at least one control unit and the torque transmitting system to actuate the torque transmitting system in the operative condition of the at least one control unit, and means for monitoring the activities of the operator of the motor vehicle. The monitoring means includes a first sensor which is arranged to transmit to the at

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least one control unit first signals serving to effect a change from inoperative condition to operative condition in response to detection of at least one first activity of the operator, and a second sensor
5 which serves to transmit to the at least one control unit second signals serving to effect the aforementioned change from inoperative condition to operative condition in response to detection of at least one second activity of the operator.

10

The torque transmitting system can include an engageable and disengageable clutch (such as a friction clutch), and the at least one first activity can involve the actuation of a brake. The at least one
15 second activity can involve a change of the condition of a starting device for the prime mover, and such device can have activated and idle conditions. If the prime mover of the power train includes a combustion engine, the starting device can include an ignition
20 system for such engine.

The first actuating means can be constructed and mounted to actuate the transmission in response to a change from inoperative to operative condition of the
25 at least one control unit.

The at least one control unit can be arranged to remain in the operative condition for predetermined intervals of time following a change from the inoperative
30 condition in response to transmission of a signal by the monitoring means.

The at least one second activity can involve a change of the condition of the aforementioned starting device
35 for the prime mover, and such starting device has

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activated and idle conditions. The arrangement can be such that, while the starting device assumes its idle condition, the at least one control unit remains in the operative condition for the duration of signal transmission by the monitoring means.

If the transmission is of the type which is manually shiftable into any one of a plurality of different gears, a signal which effects a change from inoperative condition to operative condition of the at least one control unit can be indicative of manual shifting of the transmission into one of the plurality of different gears by the operator of the vehicle.

Still further, and if the transmission is shiftable into any one of a plurality of different gears, a signal which effects a change from inoperative to operative condition of the at least one control unit can be indicative of the momentary gear of the transmission.

If the transmission is shiftable into a plurality of different gears and the torque transmitting system is an automatically disengageable friction clutch or the like, the at least one control unit can include means for disengaging the torque transmitting system by way of the second actuating means in response to a signal denoting an intention by the operator to shift the transmission into a different gear.

At least one sensor of the monitoring means can be designed to generate signals in the inoperative condition of the at least one control unit. Furthermore, at least one sensor of the monitoring means can be set up to transmit signals for the

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duration of activity of the operator of the vehicle,
and the at least one control unit can remain operative
only during transmission of signals by such at least
one sensor. Alternatively, at least one sensor of the
5 monitoring means can be set up to transmit signals for
the duration of activity of the operator, and the at
least one control unit can remain operative during and
for intervals following transmission of signals by the
at least one sensor. Such intervals can take up
10 predetermined (e.g., identical) periods of time.

As already mentioned above, the monitoring means can
include one or more analog sensors and/or one or more
digital sensors and/or one or more sensors which
15 include or constitute switches.

Still further, and as also mentioned hereinbefore, the
monitoring means can include sensors which are set up
to generate signals denoting one or more of the
20 activities or consequences of activities (a) to (n) of
the operator of the motor vehicle.

An additional feature of the invention resides in the
provision of a method of actuating at least one of an
25 automatically actuatable torque transmitting system and
an automatically actuatable transmission system in a
power train of a motor vehicle by way of at least one
control unit (such as a microprocessor) which has
operative and inoperative conditions, which is
30 connected with at least one of the automatically
actuatable systems by at least one actuating means, and
which receives signals from sensors arranged to monitor
various activities of the operator of the motor
vehicle. The method comprises the steps of changing the
35 condition of the at least one control unit from

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inoperative to operative in response to a sensor signal denoting a starting by the operator of a prime mover (e.g., an internal combustion engine) of the vehicle, and changing the condition of the at least one control unit from inoperative to operative in response to a sensor signal denoting an activity of the operator other than starting of the prime mover.

For example, the other activity can involve the actuation of a brake in the motor vehicle.

The novel features which are considered as characteristic of the invention are set forth in particular in the appended claims. The improved motor vehicle itself, however, both as to its construction and the mode of assembling, installing and operating its power train, together with numerous additional important and advantageous features thereof, will be best understood upon perusal of the following detailed description of certain presently preferred specific embodiments with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIGURE 1 is a schematic representation of certain component parts of a motor vehicle wherein the power train can be controlled or regulated in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

FIGURE 2 is a block diagram representing one presently preferred routine which can be carried out by the controls for the power train shown in FIGURE 1;

FIGURE 3 illustrates a portion of a modified motor vehicle; and

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FIGURE 4 is a block diagram showing a modified (repeatable) routine.

5 FIGURE 1 shows certain relevant component parts of a motor vehicle 1 having a power train including a prime mover 2 (such as a combustion engine or a hybrid drive utilizing an electric motor), an automated transmission 4, and an automated torque transmitting system 3 (such
10 as a friction clutch and hereinafter referred to as clutch for short) which is installed to transmit torque between a rotary output element (e.g., a camshaft or a crankshaft) of the prime mover 2 (hereinafter called engine) and a rotary input element of the transmission
15 4. The output element of the transmission 4 constitutes or drives a shaft 5 which drives a differential 6 for two driven axles 7a, 7b respectively carrying driven wheels 8a, 8b.

20 The illustrated clutch 3 comprises a flywheel or counterpressure plate 9 which can be driven by the output element of the engine 2, an axially movable pressure plate 10 which rotates with the counterpressure plate 9, a clutch plate or clutch disc
25 11 having friction linings between the plates 9, 10 and arranged to rotate the input element of the transmission 4, a disengaging bearing 12 which can act upon and can thus change the conicity of a diaphragm spring (not referenced) for the pressure plate 10, and
30 a disengaging fork 13 for the bearing 12. The actuating means 15 between an electronic control unit 50 and the fork 13 of the clutch 3 is a fluid-operated actor which comprises a master cylinder 16 controlled by a gearing (not specifically shown) in response to signals from
35 the control unit 50, a slave cylinder 18 which

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transmits motion to the fork 13, and a conduit 17 between the cylinders 6, 18. The actuating means 15 (hereinafter called actor) further comprises a reservoir 22 containing a supply of pressurized hydraulic fluid, and a snifting valve 21 between an outlet of the reservoir 22 and the master cylinder 16. An electric motor 19 of the actor 15 can impart motion to the piston 20 of the master cylinder 16 by way of the aforementioned gearing. The actor 15 can cause the clutch 3 to assume a fully disengaged condition, a fully engaged condition (in which the clutch disc 11 is compelled to share all angular movements of the plates 9, 10) as well as a number of intermediate conditions in which the clutch 3 operates with a selected amount of slip between the plates 9, 10 on the one hand and the clutch disc 11 on the other hand.

The control unit 50 can include at least one microprocessor with power electronics as well as with control or regulating electronics for the actor 15. This control unit 50 is integrated into the actor 15 (or vice versa); however, it is equally possible to install the control unit 50 and the actor in discrete housings or casings.

The control unit 50 further serves to transmit signals to a second actuating means or actor 60 which is arranged to actuate the automated transmission 4. For example, the actor 60 can include (in a manner known per se) electric motors and gearings which serve to shift the transmission 4 into a selected one of several gears such as parking (P), reverse (R), direct (D), first forward (1), and so forth. The case of the transmission 4 contains several internal components which can be manipulated by the actor 60 to shift the

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transmission into a selected gear. In addition, the vehicle 1 is equipped with a manually operable member (such as a lever) 30 which can be manipulated by the operator of the vehicle in order to transmit to the control unit 50 signals denoting the operator-selected gears for the transmission 4. The various positions of the lever 30 are monitored by a sensor 32 which transmits corresponding signals to the respective input of the control unit 50.

Another sensor 31 is associated with the actor 60 and/or with the internal components of the transmission 4 and serves to transmit to the corresponding input of the control unit 50 signals denoting the actual (momentary) setting (gear) of the transmission. The sensor 31 (or an additional sensor) can transmit to the control unit 50 one or more additional signals denoting, for example, the intent of the operator of the vehicle 1 to shift the transmission 4 into a particular gear. However, such function can also be performed by the aforementioned sensor 32 which monitors the positions of and/or the magnitude of forces applied to the gear selecting lever 30 for the transmission 4.

The monitoring means which transmits signals to the control unit 50 includes the aforementioned sensors 31, 32 as well as at least one additional sensor. FIGURE 1 shows a sensor 33 which transmits signals denoting the RPM of the shaft 5 and/or of a rotary element of the differential 6 and/or of at least one of the axles 7a, 7b and/or of at least one of the wheels 8a, 8b. A sensor 34 is provided to monitor the position of the mobile valving element of a throttle valve for the engine 2, and a further sensor 35 serves to transmit

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signals denoting the RPM of a rotary part (such as the
aforementioned output shaft) of the engine 2.

The sensor 31 can constitute an analog sensor which is
5 arranged to transmit to the control unit 50 signals
indicating the position(s) of one or more mobile
internal parts of the transmission 4 and/or the
selected gear of the transmission. Thus, the control
unit 50 can take into consideration the momentary
10 setting (gear) of the transmission 4. Furthermore, an
analog sensor 31 can perform the additional function of
informing the control unit 50 of the operator's intent
to shift into a different gear as well as of indicating
the gear which is being selected by the operator.

15 It is possible to employ a composite control unit 50
which includes two or more sections disposed in
discrete housings or casings, for example, a first
section for the actor 15 and a second section for the
20 actor 60. Such sections can be connected with one
another.

The energy source for the actor 15 and/or 60 includes a
battery 40, and such battery is preferably
25 uninterruptedly connected with the actor 15 or 60 or
with the actors 15 and 60. The reference character 41
denotes a component part of a starting device, such as
a multistage starter switch or sensor which is
connected with the actual ignition system for the
30 engine 2 by conductor means 42. The ignition system can
be operated by a customary key which closes the sensor
or switch 41 in order to start the engine 2 and to
change (via: lead 43) the condition of the control unit
50 from an inoperative to an operative condition. The
35 control unit 50 transmits an appropriate signal to the

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actor 15 for the clutch 3. In other words, the clutch 3 can be actuated by the actor 15 in response to starting of the engine 2 as a result of closing of the switch 41 in the monitoring means for the control unit 50.

5

Another sensor of the monitoring means includes a switch 44 which can be closed in response to actuation of a brake pedal 44A. This, too, can induce the control unit 50 to change its condition from inoperative to operative and to actuate the transmission 4 via actor 10 60 and/or the clutch 3 by way of the actor 15. The signal transmitting connection between the switch 44 and the control unit 50 for the actors 15 and 60 includes a conductor 45. The circuit for a brake light 15 47 can be completed via switch 44 and a further conductor 46 branching off the conductor 45.

If the ignition system (starting device) for the engine 2 is off, and the operator of the vehicle 1 decides to 20 close the switch 44 by depressing the brake pedal 44A (or by actuating the handle of the parking brake, not shown) while the ignition system for the engine is still off (i.e., while the switch 41 is open), the switch 44 transmits a signal to the control unit 50 via 25 conductor 45 so that the condition of the control unit 50 is changed from inoperative to operative while the ignition system (switch 41) for the engine is still in an idle condition. In other words, the clutch 3 can react (e.g., automatically assume a fully disengaged 30 condition in which the plates 9, 10 can turn relative to the clutch disc 11 and/or vice versa) while the engine 2 is still idle. Such disengagement of the clutch 3 is advisable or desirable before the operator begins to pivot the lever 30 for the purpose of 35 selecting a particular gear for the transmission 4.

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It is to be noted that a hydraulically operated actor 15 or 60 is but one of a number of different actors which can be utilized in the power train of the present invention. For example, at least the actor 15 can be replaced with a pneumatically operated or fully mechanical actor. Thus, the connection between the control unit 50 and the fork 13 and/or bearing 12 of the clutch 3 can comprise a mechanical linkage or a flexible motion transmitting arrangement such as one or more Bowden cables.

Furthermore, the brake-operated switch 44 is but one of a number of operator-manipulatable constituents of the motor vehicle 1 which can be operated by the driver in order to transmit a signal via conductor 45 on to the control unit 50 for the purpose of changing the condition of such control unit, particularly from inoperative to operative. by way of example, the character 44 can denote a seat switch, a gas pedal monitoring switch, a switch or sensor which is closed or opened in response to locking or unlocking and closing or lifting of the hood and/or in response to unlocking and opening or closing and locking of the trunk cover, in response to deactivation of an alarm system, in response to deactivation of a central locking and unlocking device and/or in response to manipulation of many other constituents of the motor vehicle which can be (directly or indirectly) operated by the driver or by another authorized operator.

The block diagram of FIGURE 2 represents one mode of utilizing the control unit 50 (such as a microprocessor) for the practice of the present invention. A routine is started at 100, and the block

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- 101 denotes the step of ascertaining (by monitoring the position of the switch 41) whether or not the starting device (ignition system) for the engine 2 is on. If the answer is in the affirmative, a signal is transmitted via branch 103 (corresponding to the conductor 43) to render the control unit 50 operative (at 102). If the sensor 32 and/or the sensor 31 transmits a signal indicating an intention by the operator to shift the transmission 4 into a particular gear (see the block 104 in FIGURE 2) by way of the lever 30 or indicating that such shifting of the transmission 4 is already carried out, the clutch 3 is disengaged (block 105) via actor 15. The block 105 denotes the conventional operation of the clutch 3 by the operator until the vehicle 1 is brought to a halt by turning off the engine 2 in response to opening of the switch 41 (i.e., in response to rendering the starting device inoperative. This is indicated at 120. The block 106 denotes a certain interval of delay prior to engagement of the clutch 3 (as at 107) which is followed by changing the condition of the control unit 50 to inoperative (as at 108), and the routine is terminated at 109A.
- 25 If the starting device (ignition system operated by the switch 41) is not activated at 101, the operator can render the control unit 50 operative by depressing the brake pedal 44A to close the sensor or switch 44 (block 109 in the diagram of FIGURE 2). The arrow 110 denotes in FIGURE 2 that the control unit 50 (block 102) is rendered operative in response to actuation of the brake pedal 44A, i.e., in response to closing of the switch or sensor 44.
- 35 If the step denoted by the block 104 indicates that the

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sensor 31 and/or 32 failed to transmit a signal denoting an intent by the operator to shift the transmission 4 into a different gear, the control unit 50 is informed or assumes that the transmission is in neutral gear (see the block 112) and the clutch 3 is disengaged via actor 15 (block 113 in FIGURE 2). If the transmission 4 is not in neutral gear (see the block 114 in FIGURE 2), the clutch 3 is engaged by the actor 15 (block 115). Such engagement of the clutch 3 is desirable in order to ensure that the vehicle 1 cannot start to roll. However, if the transmission 4 is in neutral gear (block 112 in FIGURE 2), the clutch 3 is disengaged (block 113) because it is reasonable to assume that, prior to leaving the vehicle, the operator will desire to shift the transmission into a selected gear (parking) in order to prevent any rolling of the vehicle. If the lever 30 is not actuated in a subsequent step, i.e., if the sensor 31 and/or 32 fails to transmit a signal denoting an intention to shift the transmission 4 into a selected gear, the clutch 3 is engaged (block 107) after elapse of a given interval (block 106), the control unit 50 is rendered inoperative (block 108), and the routine is terminated at 109A.

The arrow 130 indicates the routine for rendering the control unit 50 operative when the control unit was inoperative, for example, following or in the course of a typical vehicle parking operation.

Referring again to the block 109 in the diagram of FIGURE 2, it is not imperative that the brake pedal 44A or an equivalent brake actuating element be utilized to generate a signal which renders the control unit 50 operative as a result of closing of the switch or

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sensor 44 or actuation of another suitable sensor. As already mentioned above, the switch 44 is but one of a number of sensors which can be resorted to in order to change the condition of the control unit 50 or of at least one portion or section of a composite control unit. Thus, the condition of the control unit 50 can be changed in response to the carrying out of any one of a number of various activities by the operator of the motor vehicle including, for example, actuation of a central vehicle locking system, depression of the gas pedal, occupying the driver's seat, closing a door, closing the hood, closing the trunk and/or others. Such signal generating sensors are well known in the art of motor vehicles. Furthermore, reference may be had to U.S. patent No. 4,892,014 to Morell et al.

FIGURE 3 shows a portion of a modified motor vehicle wherein the control unit 50 is connected with the actor 15 which can be identical with the actor 15 of FIGURE 1. The energy source 40 is connected with one input of the control unit 50, and the latter is further in circuit with the switches 41 and 44. Closing of the switch 41 by the operator of the motor vehicle embodying the structure of FIGURE 3 entails the generation of a signal via conductor 201, a diode 202 and a conductor 203. Closing of the switch 44 (e.g., by a brake pedal corresponding to the brake pedal 44A of FIGURE 1) entails the transmission of a signal via conductor 204, a diode 205 and conductor 203. The purpose of the conductors 42 and 46 shown in FIGURE 3 is the same as the purpose of the similarly referenced parts in the vehicle 1 of FIGURE 1.

The diodes 202 and 205 ensure that the conductor 203 can transmit only one signal at a time.

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The block diagram of FIGURE 4 represents a modified routine which can be carried out in connection with the operation of a power train in a motor vehicle. The routine is started at 301 and is repeated essentially cyclically at predetermined intervals Δt . The block 302 denotes a determination whether the starting device (e.g., an ignition system for the engine 2 of FIGURE 1) is in an idle or in an actuated or operative condition. If the starting device is activated, the control unit and/or one of plural control units or both or all control units) is (or are) rendered operative (see the block 303). If the control unit(s) is (or are) already operative, such condition remains unchanged when the starting device is turned on. The block 305 indicates the termination of such cycle.

If the determination denoted by the block 302 indicates that the starting device is idle, the next stage of the routine involves a determination (block 304) of the presence or absence of a signal denoting an intended or progressing or completed activity (e.g., an actuation of the brake pedal) by the operator of the vehicle. If the answer is in the affirmative, the control unit(s) is (or are) rendered operative (block 303). On the other hand, if the inquiry denoted by the block 304 is answered in the negative, the routine is terminated at 305.

An important advantage of rendering the control unit(s) operative as early or as expeditiously as possible in the aforescribed manner and under the aforescribed circumstances is that it is possible to carry out various operations which can be carried out only when the control unit or units is or are operative

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without the need for activation of the control unit(s) in a separate step or operation. For example, it is now possible to carry out preparations to ensure reliable operation of various components of or of the entire vehicle such as, for example, the building up of adequate system pressure in the fluid operated device(s) or apparatus. Furthermore, it is possible to carry out a calibration of characteristic lines of various subsystems, such as valves. Still further, it is possible to carry out and memorize adaptations of system-defining parameters with reference to actual parameters. Such system-defining parameters can be those of an actor (such as 15 and/or 60) and/or of one or more aggregates such as the clutch 3 and/or the transmission 4. For example, a parameter which can be adapted is the exact (or at least approximate) point or setting when the clutch begins to transmit torque during adjustment from the fully disengaged condition toward the fully engaged condition.

It is also possible to adapt a synchronizing position, namely a position which certain internal gear shifting or selecting components of the transmission (such as 4) assume when the synchronizing step or operation begins and/or when such step or operation is completed. still further, it is possible to adapt the end positions of actuating members or elements of the clutch and/or transmission, such as the aforementioned internal gear shifting components of the transmission (4) and/or the disengaging bearing (12) of the clutch (3).

It is also possible to carry out an early calibration of various analog or digital sensors or of sensors which comprise or constitute electric switches and/or to calibrate the end positions of mobile sensors or

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mobile component parts of sensors. A presently preferred procedure involves intentional or planned movements of the actors (or of certain parts of the actors) to their end positions and an adaption of such
5 end positions by the corresponding elements (sensors) of the monitoring means which is associated with the control unit(s).

Another advantage of the improved method and power
10 train is that the automated component(s) of the power train can be caused to assume a predetermined position or condition (e.g., the clutch 3 of FIGURE 1 can assume a fully disengaged condition and/or the transmission 4 of FIGURE 1 can be shifted into a particular gear) even
15 before the control unit(s) is (are) rendered operative. Moreover, and if the result of the generation of a signal denoting an activity by the operator of the motor vehicle is an automatic change of the condition of the control unit(s) from inoperative to operative
20 (i.e., as an adjunct to or as a result of an operation or step which need not be carried out for the sole purpose of changing the condition of the control unit or units), it is possible to select a particular condition for the clutch and/or a particular gear for
25 the transmission much earlier than in accordance with prior proposals because the actor or actors can adjust the transmission and/or the clutch without it being necessary to carry out a step or an operation for the sole purpose of rendering the control unit(s)
30 operative, i.e., the control unit(s) can become operative as an adjunct to or as a result of an activity of the operator which is not or need not be carried out for the express or sole purpose of changing the condition of the control unit(s). Early changes of
35 the condition of the control unit(s) need not be

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beneficial solely for the aforementioned purpose of early adjustment of the clutch and/or transmission by way of the (corresponding) actor or actors but can also permit earlier activation of certain other systems such as the electronic component(s) of an ABS (antiblocking) system for the brake(s), vehicle immobilizing or arresting devices with their own or discrete controls /in lieu of or in addition to manually actuatable parking brakes) and/or others.

10 An additional advantage of the improved method and power train is that the vehicle need not be provided with discrete means (such as one or more knobs, buttons, levers or the like) for changing the condition of the control unit(s) because such change can be effected automatically in response to expected or necessary (indispensable) activities by the operator of the motor vehicle, such as closing the door next to the driver's seat, occupying the driver's seat, applying a certain force to the gear shifting member 30 and/or others. In other words, it is not necessary to connect the control unit(s) with one or more discrete sensors which are to be actuated (as in accordance with heretofore known proposals) for the sole purpose of changing the condition of the control unit(s). For example, when the operator actuates the brake pedal or the parking brake, this automatically results in the carrying out of one or more steps which, in conventional motor vehicles, necessitate one or more separate operations.

A specific example of the advantages of our improved method and power train is as follows: The operator wishes to avoid a rolling of a parked vehicle along a sloping road surface. To this end, the operator steps

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on the brake pedal. The ignition system for the engine is still off but the control unit(s) is or are rendered operative so that the actor for the clutch can automatically disengage the clutch before the operator
5 actuates the lever 30 for the purpose of shifting the transmission into a selected gear. The parking brake is thereupon released by the operator or automatically. The engine is started as soon as the operator applies the ignition key so that the starting device can carry
10 out its function.

As indicated in the diagram of FIGURE 2, the control unit(s) can remain operative for a certain interval of time following the transmission of a signal denoting an
15 activity by the operator prior to completion of a routine, and the duration of such interval can be predetermined (such as unchanging). The length of the interval can be anywhere between 0.1 second and one or more hours or until the operator decides to open the
20 switch 41 (i.e., to change the condition of the starting device from operative to idle). As already mentioned above, the starting device can be rendered operative (i.e., the switch 41 can be closed) subsequent to a change of the condition of the control
25 unit(s) from inoperative to operative, e.g., in response to a signal denoting a closing of the switch 44 by the brake pedal 44A.

Alternatively, the design of the control unit(s) can be
30 such that the unit or units remains or remain operative only as long as at least one sensor of the monitoring means (such as the switch 44) transmits a signal denoting the corresponding activity or undertaking by the operator of the motor vehicle. As already explained
35 with reference to FIGURES 1 and 2, the control unit(s)

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can be rendered operative in response to actual carrying out of one or more specific actions and/or in response to detection of an intent to perform a particular function. Thus, the sensor 31 and/or 32 can
5 initiate a change of the condition of the control unit 50 as soon as such sensor detects that the operator has exerted a certain force to the lever 30 and/or that one or more internal components of the transmission 4 have changed their positions to an extent which is
10 indicative of an impending shifting into a different gear or into a particular gear.

It is advisable that a control unit (such as the control unit 50 shown in FIGURE 1) carry out a
15 plausibility test prior to changing its condition from inoperative to operative; this is advisable, for example, when the control unit 50 is to change its condition from inoperative to operative in response to a signal which is transmitted by the sensor 31 and/or
20 32 and denotes that the transmission 4 is likely to be shifted into a different gear, such as into neutral.

At least one of the various sensors can be designed in such a way that it is capable of transmitting a signal
25 denoting an activity or an impending activity by the operator of the motor vehicle while the control unit(s) is or are maintained in the inoperative condition.

It is often desirable to design the controls for the power train in such a way that the control unit(s) is
30 or are rendered operative or remains or remain operative only in response to the transmission of at least one signal denoting a particular activity (or an intent to perform an action) by the operator, and that
35 the control unit(s) is or are rendered inoperative in

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automatic response to an interruption of the transmission of such signal. Alternatively, and as already mentioned hereinbefore, the control unit(s) can be rendered inoperative after the elapse of a given
5 (fixed or variable) interval following an interruption of transmission of a signal from at least one sensor of the monitoring means which is connected with one or more signal receiving inputs of the control unit(s). The arrangement can be such that the interval is
10 variable but, once selected, remains unchanged until and unless altered by the operator or in a repair shop. For example, the length of the interval during which the control unit(s) remains or remain operative subsequent to an interruption of signal transmission
15 from at least one sensor of the monitoring means can be anywhere between 0.1 second and one or more hours, or until the starting device for the prime mover is turned off.

20 In accordance with a presently preferred embodiment, the control unit(s) can be rendered operative in response to a signal from at least one of a number of sensors which monitor the position of a brake pedal or a parking (or any other) brake, the opening or closing
25 of a door, the lifting or closing of the hood, the lifting or closing of the trunk cover, the activation or inactivation of an alarm system, the insertion or withdrawal of a door key, the occupying or termination of occupancy of a seat (such as the driver's seat), the
30 depression of the gas pedal, turning on or off the lights and/or the headlamp flasher, activation of the horn, turning on of a radio receiver, actuation of the lever 30, activation of a central locking or blocking system and/or actuation or termination of actuation of
35 any other constituent(s) or component(s) expected to be

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manipulated by the operator of the motor vehicle.

Without further analysis, the foregoing will so fully
reveal the gist of the present invention that others
5 can, by applying current knowledge, readily adapt it
for various applications without omitting features
that, from the standpoint of prior art, fairly
constitute essential characteristics of the generic and
specific aspects of the above outlined contribution to
10 the art of power trains for use in motor vehicles and,
therefore, such adaptations should and are intended to
be comprehended within the meaning and range of
equivalence of the appended claims.

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Claims

1. A motor vehicle comprising a power train including a
5 prime mover, an automatically actuatable transmission
and a torque transmitting system; at least one control
unit having operative and inoperative conditions;
actuating means between said at least one control unit
and said transmission to actuate said transmission in
10 the operative condition of said at least one control
unit: a starting device for said prime mover, said
device having activated and idle conditions and being
operative to change the condition of said at least one
control unit in response to a change between said
15 actuated and idle conditions; and means for monitoring
the activities of an operator of the vehicle and for
transmitting to said at least one control unit signals
effecting a change from inoperative to operative
condition in response to detection of at least one
20 particular activity by the operator.

2. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said torque
transmitting system includes a friction clutch
connecting an output element of said prime mover with
25 an input element of said transmission.

3. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said activity
involves the actuation of a brake.

30 4. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said monitoring
means includes a first sensor arranged to transmit said
signals and at least one additional sensor.

5. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said prime mover
35 includes a combustion engine and said starting device

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includes an ignition system for said engine.

6. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said torque
transmitting system is an automatically actuatable
5 system and further comprising an additional control
unit and second actuating means interposed between said
additional control unit and said system.

7. The vehicle of claim 6, wherein said additional
10 control unit is arranged to actuate said system by way
of said second actuating means in response to signals
from said at least one control unit.

8. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said actuating means
15 is arranged to actuate said transmission in response to
a change from inoperative to operative condition of
said at least one control unit.

9. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said at least one
20 control unit is arranged to remain in said operative
condition for a predetermined interval of time
following a change from said inoperative condition in
response to transmission of a signal by said monitoring
means.

25
10. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein, in the idle
condition of said starting device, said at least one
control unit is arranged to remain in said operative
condition for the duration of signal transmission by
30 said monitoring means.

11. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said transmission
is manually shiftable into a plurality of gears and a
signal which effects a change from inoperative to
35 operative condition of said at least one control unit

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is indicative of manual shifting of said transmission into one of said plurality of gears by the operator of the vehicle.

5 12. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said transmission is shiftable into any one of a plurality of years and a signal which effects a change from inoperative to operative condition of said at least one control unit is indicative of the momentary gear of said
10 transmission.

13. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said transmission is shiftable into a plurality of gears and said torque transmitting system is an automatically disengageable
15 system, and further comprising additional actuating means for said torque transmitting system, said at least one control unit including means for disengaging said system via said additional actuating means in response to a signal denoting an intention by the
20 operator to shift said transmission.

14. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said monitoring means includes at least one sensor which is effective to generate signals in the inoperative condition of
25 said at least one control unit.

15. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said monitoring means includes at least one sensor arranged to transmit signals for the duration of activity of the operator
30 and said at least one control unit remains operative only during transmission of signals by said at least one sensor.

16. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said monitoring
35 means includes at least one sensor arranged to transmit

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signals for the duration of activity of the operator and said at least one control unit remains operative during and for intervals following transmission of signals by said at least one sensor.

5

17. The vehicle of claim 16, wherein said intervals take up predetermined periods of time.

18. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said monitoring means includes at least one analog sensor.

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19. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said monitoring means includes at least one digital sensor.

20. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said monitoring means includes at least one switch.

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21. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said monitoring means includes means for generating signals denoting at least one of (a) the condition of a parking brake, (b) the position of a brake pedal, (c) actuation of a door switch, (d) the position of a hood, (e) the position of a trunk cover, (f) the condition of an alarm system, (g) the condition of a seat switch, (h) the position of a gas pedal, (i) the position of a light control switch, (j) the condition of a headlamp flasher, (k) the condition of a horn, (l) the condition of a radio receiver, (m) the position of a gear ratio selecting element for the transmission, and (n) the position or condition of another adjustable constituent of the vehicle.

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22. A motor vehicle comprising a power train including a prime mover, an automatically actuatable transmission and an automatically actuatable torque transmitting

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system; at least one control unit having operative and inoperative conditions; first actuating means operating between said at least one control unit and said transmission to actuate said transmission in the operative condition of said at least one control unit; second actuating means operating between said at least one control unit and said torque transmitting system to actuate said system in the operative condition of said at least one control unit; and means for monitoring the activities of an operator of the motor vehicle, including a first sensor arranged to transmit to said at least one control unit first signals effecting a change from inoperative to operative condition in response to detection of at least one first activity of the operator, and a second sensor arranged to transmit to said at least one control unit second signals effecting said change in response to detection of at least one second activity.

23. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein said torque transmitting system includes an engageable and disengageable friction clutch, said at least one first activity involving the actuation of a brake and said at least one second activity involving a change of the condition of a starting device for said prime mover, said device having activated and idle conditions.

24. The vehicle of claim 23, wherein said prime mover includes a combustion engine and said starting device includes an ignition system for said engine.

25. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein said first actuating means is arranged to actuate said transmission in response to a change from inoperative to operative condition of said at least one control

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unit.

26. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein said at least one control unit is arranged to remain in said operative
5 condition for a predetermined interval of time following a change from said inoperative condition in response to transmission of a signal by said monitoring means.

10 27. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein said at least one second activity involves a change of the condition of a starting device for said prime mover, said starting device having activated and idle conditions and, in the idle condition of said starting device, said at least
15 one control unit is arranged to remain in said operative condition for the duration of signal; transmission by said monitoring means.

28. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein said transmission
20 is manually shiftable into a plurality of gears and a signal which effects a change from inoperative to operative condition of said at least one control unit is indicative of manual shifting of said transmission into one of said plurality of gears by the operator of
25 the vehicle.

29. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein said transmission is shiftable into any one of a plurality of gears and a signal which effects a change from inoperative to
30 operative condition of said at least one control unit is indicative of the momentary year of said transmission.

30. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein said transmission
35 is shiftable into a plurality of gears and said torque

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transmitting system is an automatically disengageable system, said at least one control unit including means for disengaging said torque transmitting system via said second actuating means in response to a signal
5 denoting an intention by the operator to shift said transmission.

31. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein at least one of said sensors is effective to generate signals in the
10 inoperative condition of said at least one control unit.

32. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein at least one of said sensors is arranged to transmit signals for the
15 duration of activity of the operator and said at least one control unit remains operative only during transmission of signals by said at least one sensor.

33. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein at least one of said sensors is arranged to transmit signals for the
20 duration of activity of the operator and said at least one control unit remains operative during and for intervals following transmission of signals by said at least one sensor.

25 34. The vehicle of claim 33, wherein said intervals take up predetermined periods of time.

35 35. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein said monitoring means includes at least one analog sensor.

36. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein said monitoring means includes at least one digital sensor.

35 37. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein at least one of

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said sensors includes at least one switch.

38. The vehicle of claim 22, wherein said monitoring means includes sensors for generating signals denoting at least one of (a) the condition of a parking brake, (b) the position of a brake pedal, (c) actuation of a door switch, (d) the position of a hood, (e) the position of a trunk cover, (f) the condition of an alarm system, (g) the condition of a seat switch, (h) the position of a gas pedal, (i) the position of a light control switch, (j) the condition of a headlamp flasher, (k) the condition of a horn, (l) the condition of a radio receiver, (m) the position of a gear ratio selecting element for the transmission, and (n) the position or condition of another adjustable constituent of the vehicle.

39. A method of actuating at least one of an automatically actuatable torque transmitting system and an automatically actuatable transmission system in a power train of a motor vehicle by way of at least one control unit which has operative and inoperative conditions, which is connected with at least one of the systems by at least one actuating means, and which receives signals from sensors arranged to monitor various activities of an operator of the vehicle, comprising the steps of changing the condition of the at least one control unit from inoperative to operative in response to a sensor signal denoting a starting by the operator of a prime mover of the vehicle; and changing the condition of the at least one control unit from inoperative to operative in response to a sensor signal denoting an activity of the operator other than starting of the prime mover.

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40. The method of claim 39, wherein said other activity involves the actuation of a brake in the motor vehicle.

41. A motor vehicle substantially as herein described
5 with reference to the accompanying drawings.

42. A method of operating a motor vehicle substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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Application No: GB 9721203.9
Claims searched: 1 - 40

Examiner: Tom Sutherland
Date of search: 19 February 1998

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:
UK CI (Ed.P): B7H (HXG); F2D (DA, DCG); F2L (LAX, LC, LD, LT)
Int CI (Ed.6): F16H 59/04, 59/08, 59/50; B60K 23/02, 41/22, 41/24, 41/26, 41/28
Other:

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
X, E	GB 2313425 A (LUK) Whole document, but note page 13 lines 5 to 34 in particular.	1 - 39
X	WO 95/21073 A (AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTS) Figs 2, 3.	1, 2
X	WO 94/28328 A (AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTS) Page 7 lines 11 to 18.	1, 39
X	US 5495925 (FICHTEL & SACHS) Whole document relevant.	1, 2, 4 - 8, 39
X	US 4892014 (SPARTON) The acknowledged prior art. Operation of ignition, starter is an operator activity.	1, 5

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.